

STRATEGIES FOR KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT/TRANSFER

There are many ways for an organization to identify, store, and transfer knowledge. Some strategies will work better in one organization than another. Some may not be appropriate for specific types of content. The challenge is to identify and develop complementary ways to further knowledge management and transfer in an organization. Each of the strategies listed below has or will have a link to more detailed information.

Apprenticeships, Internships, and Traineeships: Formal arrangements where an experienced person passes along knowledge and skill to a novice who, after a designated period of time, reaches the journey level. Examples in New York State include apprenticeships for occupations such as electricians, plumbers, and steamfitters; one-to-three year traineeships for computer programmers or administrative titles; and summer internships used by many State agencies.

Best Practices: The identification and use of processes and/or practices that result in excellent products or services. Best practices, sometimes called preferred practices, often generate ideas for improvements in other organizations or work units.

Communities of Practice: Groups of individuals who share knowledge about a common work practice over a period of time, though they are not part of a formally constituted work team. Communities of practice generally cut across traditional organizational boundaries. They enable individuals to acquire new knowledge faster. They may also be called Communities of Interest if the people share an interest in something but do not necessarily perform the work on a daily basis.

Documenting Processes: Developing a written or electronic record of a specific work process that includes the business case for the process, steps in the process, key dates, relationship to other processes that come before and after, key players and contact information, any required references and legal citations, back-up procedures, and copies of forms, software, data sets, and file names associated with the process. (More detailed account coming soon.)

Document Repositories: Collections of documents that can be viewed, retrieved, and interpreted by humans and automated software systems (e.g. statistical software packages). Document repositories add navigation and categorization services to stored information. Key word search capability is often provided to facilitate information retrieval.

Expert Interviews: Sessions where one or more people who are considered experts in a particular subject, program, policy, or process, etc. meet with others to share knowledge. Expert interviews can be used in many ways, including capturing knowledge of those scheduled to leave an organization, conducting

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lessons learned debriefings, and identifying job competencies.

Videotaped a multi-day session where recent retirees reflected on the reasons for success and failure.

Job Aids: These are tools that help people perform tasks accurately. They include things such as checklists, flow diagrams, reference tables, decision tree diagrams, etc. that provide specific, concrete information to the user and serve as a quick reference guide to performing a task. Job aids are not the actual tools used to perform tasks, such as computers, measuring tools, or telephones.

Knowledge Audits: Knowledge audits help an organization identify its knowledge assets, including what knowledge is needed and available. They provide information on how knowledge assets are produced and shared, and where there is a need for internal transfer of knowledge.

Knowledge Fairs: These events showcase information about an organization or a topic. They can be used internally, to provide a forum for sharing information, or externally, to educate customers or other stakeholders about important information.

Knowledge Maps and Inventories: These catalog information/knowledge available in an organization and where it is located. They point to information but do not contain it. An example is an Experts or Resource Directory that lists people with expert knowledge who can be contacted by others in need of that knowledge.

Learning Games: These structured learning activities are used to make learning fun and more effective, provide a review of material that has already been presented in order to strengthen learning, and evaluate how much learning has occurred.

Lessons Learned Debriefings: These debriefings are a way to identify, analyze, and capture experiences, what worked well and what needs improvement, so others can learn from those experiences. For maximum impact, lessons learned debriefings should be done either immediately following an event or on a regular basis, with results shared quickly among those who would benefit from the knowledge gained. Hewlett Packard refers to their lessons learned sessions held during and at the end of projects in order to share knowledge as "Project Snapshots."

Mentoring: In mentoring, an experienced, skilled person (mentor) is paired with a lesser skilled or experienced person (protégé), with the goal of developing or strengthening competencies of the protégé.

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On-the-Job Training: Most organizations use some form of on-the-job training where an experienced employee teaches a new person how to perform job tasks. If this happens at random or with no consistent written materials or processes, it is called unstructured OJT. A system of structured OJT differs in that specific training processes are written; training materials and guides exist and are used consistently by all those who train; training is scheduled; records are kept of training sessions; and “trainers” are given training on how to do OJT, how to give feedback, and several other factors.

Storytelling: This involves the construction of fictional examples or the telling of real organizational stories to illustrate a point and effectively transfer knowledge. An organizational story is a detailed narrative of management actions, employee interactions, or other intra-organizational events that are communicated informally within the organization. When used well, story telling is a powerful transformational tool in organizations.

Training: Training encompasses a large variety of activities designed to facilitate learning (of knowledge, skills, and abilities or competencies) by those being trained. Methodologies can include: classroom instruction, simulations, role-plays, computer or web-based instruction, small and large group exercises, and more. It can be instructor-led or self-directed in nature.